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MONTANA.

Montana, one of the north-western states of the American Union, extends from 104° to 116° W. long., and from 44° 15′ to 49° N. lat., and is bounded N. by the Canadian provinces of Alberta and Assiniboia, E. by North and South Dakota, S. by Wyoming and Idaho, and W. by Idaho. In area—146,080 sq. m., or nearly five times the size of Scotland—it ranks third among all the states and territories, but in population only 44th: Delaware is 71 times less, and has one-fourth more inhabitants.

The Rocky Mountains, with their subsidiary ranges, occupy fully one-fifth of the surface, in the south and west; the rest of the state is made up of valleys or high, rolling prairies, treeless, but yielding nutritious grasses. The head-waters of two of the largest rivers in North America—the Columbia and Missouri—have their sources in Montana. The mean elevation of the state is about 3000 feet; the average height of the Rocky Mountains—whose sides are covered with dense forests of pine, fir, and cedar—is about 6000 feet, while the highest peaks rise to 10,000 or 12,000 feet. The Yellowstone National Park (q.v.) forms part of the southern boundary of the state. In the

south-east the Bad Lands extend into the state from Wyoming (q.v.). The climate of Montana is more moderate than that of the Dakotas and Minnesota, since the warm westerly winds prevail more than the north winds in winter here; there are but few excessively cold days, and, as there is little moisture in the air, the winters are less chilly and more exhilarating than in the east. The atmosphere is remarkable for its clearness, and cyclones are unknown.

The soil of Montana contains all that is needed for sustaining vegetation, but it is almost valueless without irrigation; with that, however, the yield of grains and vegetables is enormous. There are already hundreds of irrigating ditches within the state, and the federal government is locating storage reservoirs all along the Rocky Mountain range, to store water for this purpose from the melting snows in spring-time. It is calculated that 20,000,000 acres of land can thus be brought under cultivation. Placer mining being practically exhausted, a large part of the population has turned its attention to stock-raising, for which Montana is better suited than for agriculture. The prairies produce several varieties of bunch grass, which cures on the stalk in August, and retains all its nourishing qualities throughout the year; stock on the range receive no other feed, summer or winter, and very little shelter is required.

But the great industry of Montana is the mining and reduction of her gold, silver, lead, and copper ores. Her minerals first attracted emigration, and have hitherto been her principal wealth. The first systematic working of placer mines for gold com-

menced in 1862; in 1863 the first gold-quartz mill was built. According to the U. S. Treasury Reports, the total value of gold and silver produced in Montana from 1862 to and including 1889 was: gold, $178,589,421; silver, $108,992,319; total, $287,581,740. The annual value of the lead produced is over $1,000,000. The total yield of copper up to 1882 was 4044 long tons; in 1882–89 it was 215,992 tons. The value of these four metals in 1889 exceeded $40,000,000.

History.—The portion of Montana east of the Rocky Mountains was part of the Louisiana Purchase; that lying to the west formerly composed a part of Oregon and Washington states. It was first visited by the French in 1742–43, and by Lewis and Clarke in 1804–6; these were followed by fur-traders and trappers, and by Jesuit missionaries, who established schools for Indian boys and girls. Gold was discovered in 1861, and mining began in earnest the following year. In 1864 the territory was organised, and on 8th November 1889 Montana became a state of the Union. Education, for a frontier state, is well organised, and the exhaustion of the placer mines and the spread of railways have contributed to drive away the worst elements of the early population and replace them with industrious settlers. The chief towns include the capital, Helena (q.v.), Butte City (10,701), and Virginia City. Pop. (1870) 20,595; (1880) 39,159; (1890) 131,769, including some 1500 Chinese and 12,500 Indians. Troubles with the latter have been frequent: in 1876 General Custer (q.v.), and his command were all killed on the Little Big Horn by the Sioux.

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